



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

OUR VERY BEST FRIEND

KEY PASSAGE: John 15:12-17 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Matthew 26:49-50 | Luke 5:19-20; 7:33-34; 12:1, 4
John 11:1-11; 15:12-17 | Romans 5:10

► SUMMARY

No matter how great a friend is, there will always be misunderstandings and disappointments.

That's just the nature of human relationships. But believers have a friend Who's superior to all others, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not only our Creator, Sovereign Ruler, Savior, and Lord, but our intimate friend as well. He will never leave, and nothing can ever separate us from His love.

► SERMON POINTS

Because of His awesome greatness, the idea of Jesus being our friend may be difficult to imagine, but He has no problem seeing us as His friends. When He lived as a man on earth, He referred to many people as a "friend."

- **Luke 5:19-20.** When some men who were bringing a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing couldn't get in the door, they let the man down through the roof. Seeing their faith, Jesus responded, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you" (v. 20).
- **Luke 7:33-34.** The Pharisees and Sadducees were offended by Jesus because of His association with sinful people. They accused Him, saying, "Behold, a gluttonous man and a heavy drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (v. 34).
- **Luke 12:4.** On another occasion, Jesus said to His disciples, "Now I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."

- **John 11:11.** When Jesus heard that His friend Lazarus was sick, He told His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going so that I may awaken him from sleep."
- **Matthew 26:49-50.** The most shocking instance in which Jesus called someone "friend" was when Judas was betraying Him. "Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested Him" (v. 50).

How Jesus Expresses His Friendship

John 15:12-17 is a wonderful description of how Christ demonstrates His friendship with us.

- **With Sacrificial Love.** "Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends" (v. 13). There have always been people who've given their lives to save others, but Jesus' sacrifice is much greater. When someone lays down his life to save another, it's usually a spontaneous act in a moment of great danger. In contrast, Jesus Christ planned to give His life for us before the foundation of the world. He loved us before we were born and died on the cross to rescue us from sin while we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Unlike a person who dies to save a person physically, Jesus' death on the cross rescues us from eternal punishment and gives us eternal life.
- **By Taking the Initiative in the Relationship.** "You did not choose Me but I chose you" (John 15:16). No one can choose to be Christ's friend; He alone takes the initiative. He didn't choose us as His friends because of anything worthy in us or because of our good works. The only reason we can have a relationship with the

Lord is because of what He did for us. Our only role was to respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction of our sin and cry out for mercy and salvation.

- **By the Revolutionary Effect on Our Lives.** "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (v. 12). "You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends" (vv. 14-15). When we were saved, our lives were completely changed. We were given a new heart and spirit. Now we relate to Christ in an entirely different fashion—as His intimate friends. This transformation is characterized by a life of obedience to His commands and Christlike love for one another.
- **By Revealing Divine Truth.** "I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (v. 15). While Jesus was with His disciples, He revealed divine truths from His Father that couldn't have been known any other way. These revelations weren't given to everyone, but only to those He called friends. After Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit brought to mind all that Jesus had told His disciples, and now they are recorded in the Bible for all of us to know.
- **By Challenging Us.** "I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain" (v. 16). The fruit Christ wants us to bear as His friends are internal qualities of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) and good works that He's planned for us to do. In other words, He challenges us to become who He desires us to be and accomplish what He's planned for us to do.

The Kind of Friend Jesus Is

- **He accepts us** as we are but doesn't leave us that way.
- **He has time for us** and is never too busy.
- **He talks to us** through His written Word.
- **He listens to us** when we pray.

- **He forgives us** and grants us His perfect record of righteousness.
- **He understands us** in our struggles and weaknesses.
- **He walks with us** through our trials.
- **He's available** to meet our needs in every circumstance.
- **He's open** and doesn't try to hide Himself. He's revealed His ways and thoughts in His Word.
- **He's sensitive** and knows us better than we know ourselves.
- **He encourages us** throughout life.
- **He's patient** and longsuffering with us in our personal battles and frailties, and guides us in our spiritual growth.
- **He's a giver.** Everything we have is from Him, including life itself.
- **He touches us** in our times of need through the hands of His people and His presence with us.
- **He's always truthful** and will never deceive us.
- **He's always faithful.** Whatever He says, He will do.
- **He's committed to us** and will keep His promises.
- **He confronts us** when we sin because He loves us.
- **He desires the best for us.** Sometimes that means He must rearrange our plans in order to make them like His.
- **He loves us unconditionally.** There's nothing we have to do to earn or merit His love.
- **He gave His life for us.**
- **He's prepared a place in heaven for us.**
- **He's going to spend eternity with us.**

► RESPONSE

- Do you have a difficult time seeing Jesus Christ as your friend? What misconceptions keep you from enjoying the intimate relationship that He died to give you?
- What aspects of His friendship bring you encouragement and strength during this season of your life?

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